

## ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER TITLE: The Investigation of Discourse Markers in Oral Personal

Narratives of the Najdi Dialect of Arabic

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This study investigates the following Arabic lexical items; *wa* ‘and’, *fa* ‘so’, *yani* ‘I mean’, *baden* ‘then’, and *thomen* ‘after that’, functioning as discourse markers (DMs) employed in oral narratives of personal experience in the Najdi dialect of Saudi Arabic. Audio recordings of three personal oral narratives as part of naturally occurring conversations are used as the method for collecting the data of this project. The participants of this study are Saudi females of equal social status specifically from the Najdi region. The narratives collected all revolve around the topic of courtship experiences and engagement events; and thus are referred to as ‘oral narratives of personal experience’. The main goal of this study is to add to the existing linguistic literature on discourse markers and narrative structure, by exploring the uses and functions of these discourse markers in personal oral narratives in a relatively understudied language variety: Saudi Arabic.

This study discusses the functions of these particles and their role in organizing and structuring a narrative. It analyzes the semantic functions and the frequencies of these discourse markers and examines how they interact with Labov’s (1972) structural elements of narratives of

personal experience: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda.

The data for this study is collected from naturally occurring conversations; 45-minute recorded conversations between the researcher and the three female participants. The participants are all from the Najdi region: born and raised in the Province of Riyadh. Their ages range from 25 to 35, and are all married and roughly from the same upper-middle class socio-economic status.

Complete personal narratives are identified, transcribed, and analyzed. The data are analyzed quantitatively to determine the frequency of the discourse particles and their placement in the narratives. They are also analyzed qualitatively to uncover the functions of these markers in the narratives and the coherence relations they create within the story. Moreover, the investigation also involves delineating the syntactic positions of these five examined discourse markers and their appearance in relation to lines, verses, subsections, section and scenes.

The evidence reveals a range of interesting findings, these include: 1) the multiple functions that the discourse markers serve -- most of which had been already attested and approved in the literature; 2) the frequent presence of *wa* ‘and’ and *yani* ‘I mean’ throughout the narratives and specifically in the complicating action and the resolution, suggesting the core roles of these elements in narratives of personal experience; 3) the two discourse markers *baden* ‘then’ and *thomen* ‘after that’ behave similarly; 4) all five discourse markers appear most frequently in line-initial positions; 5) the syntactic distribution of the discourse markers in these Arabic narratives correlates with the importance of the semantic/pragmatic functions they serve within these narratives; 6) the discourse markers are only one of the linguistic devices that play a role in the coherence of these narratives of personal experience; 7) the discourse markers and their

positioning have a significant influence on the structure and the organization of the courtship narratives which have a somewhat similar rhetorical structure influenced by the discourse particles.

The goal of this study is to add new data and analysis to the existing linguistic literature on discourse markers and narrative structure. This study will also add to the comparative database of language-specific narratives.